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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# Park Plaza Cooperative Breaks Ground on New Storm Shelter and Community Center

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**Fridley, MN |** Many homeowners dream of kitchen renovations and double-stall garages, but for the homeowners in Park Plaza Cooperative, one of the biggest dreams has been having a safe place to go in times of severe weather. In fact, Park Plaza homeowners have been dreaming of constructing a new storm shelter for almost a decade--ever since they came together to purchase their manufactured home community in 2011.

Park Plaza's existing shelter is a small, windowless underground bunker that can accommodate only a fraction of the community's 200 plus residents. (The structure is also without electricity and prone to flooding). Since becoming resident-owned, the Cooperative has directed residents to a nearby hospital in times of severe weather, but for residents with physical disabilities and those without vehicles, the chances of actually making it to the hospital in time to avoid a weather event are slim. For these reasons, the Co-op has made construction of a new shelter a top priority.

This Thursday, August 16 at 4 p.m. the Co-op will break ground on a new, state-of-the-art, combination storm shelter and community center, which will provide a safe, pleasant place for the Co-op to gather for generations to come. The bulk of the project was funded through a one-time Minnesota Housing grant program and a large chunk of the Co-op's reserve fund. After unforeseen increases in construction cost threatened to scuttle the project, the Co-op worked tirelessly over many months to identify additional grant funding and took out an additional loan in order to assemble the balance of funds necessary to complete the project.

Throughout the journey to reach today's groundbreaking, the Co-op was assisted by Northcountry Cooperative Foundation (NCF) and the Co-op's State representatives, Senator Carolyn Laine and Representative Connie Bernardy.

Park Plaza Board President Natividad Seefeld hopes the project will help encourage other community owners to build shelters to protect residents.

“We finally did it. After years of living in fear about the next storm that comes our way, our community will finally have safe place to go. And, we will have a place to get together and host co-op meetings, which is a huge bonus since we’ve been meeting in our garage all these years! My heart is filled with great joy and so much thanks for all the wonderful people who came together to make this project happen. I hope our success with this project will encourage other community owners to build or update their shelters in order to keep residents safe.” -Natividad Seefeld, Board President of Park Plaza Cooperative

### **Background on Storm Shelters in Minnesota**

Unlike most site-built homes of the Midwest, manufactured homes are typically built without a below-grade basement. No basement isn’t a problem for most manufactured homeowners, that is, unless you’re in a tornado alley, which most of Minnesota is. For this reason, Minnesota Statute requires all manufactured home communities to have an onsite storm shelter. The law was put in place after most of the communities in the state were built, however, which means many communities have no or inadequate storm shelters. (Existing manufactured home communities were grandfathered in after the law was enacted. Grandfathered communities are required to provide an evacuation plan to residents in lieu of a storm shelter).

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**Park Plaza Cooperative** is a not-for-profit 308B Cooperative and one of Minnesota’s growing number of resident-owned manufactured home communities. Park Plaza is located in the north Twin Cities Metro in the city of Fridley, just 10 miles from downtown Minneapolis. The Co-op is home to over 200 residents. [parkplaza.coop](http://parkplaza.coop)

**Northcountry Cooperative Foundation (NCF)**, a [ROC USA](http://ROCUSA.org) Certified Technical Assistance Provider, is a Minneapolis-based nonprofit organization formed in 1999. NCF’s primary line of business is converting manufactured home communities to resident-owned communities. This initiative advances NCF’s mission and plays a vital role in its strategic plan. [northcountryfoundation.org](http://northcountryfoundation.org)